

9/22/92

Mr. Richard Cohen, newsroom
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Mr. Cohen,

In any real Iran/Contra investigation it should not have required a private citizen to inform the supposed investigators about how the cover-up got started and what made it possible for North have enjoy his shredding party

I had no response, not even acknowledgement of this letter to the special prosecutor. Who is about to close up shop and to a degree become part of the cover-up.

It shocked me to see and hear Meese perpetrate that fraud from the White House in the presence of the press no reporter knowing enough about how the government works to have asked the obvious follow-up question, indicated in the enclosed.

It is no less shocking to find that ever since then the press has failed to ask it and thereby put ^{Meese} ~~Meese~~ and the White House lawyers who certainly knew the truth in the proper perspective.

Unless something is finally done about liars in important government policy position we'll continue to have liars in those positions and they'll continue to lie and administrations will continue with faulted policies with immunity.

Sincerely,



Harold Weisberg

Richard Cohen

What Did Bush Know?

Iran-contra prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, having spent six years and \$32.5 million, has announced that he's winding it up. This 80-year-old man ends his investigation (but not some pending trials) having lost more than he's won and, it seems safe to say, with a nation almost totally uninterested in his task. Maybe that explains why the basic question about George Bush will probably never be answered: What did he know, when did he know it, and why can't he get his story straight?

It's probably something of an impertinence to suggest that Bush has not been on the level about Iran-contra. After all, we are supposed to be preoccupied with how Bill Clinton conducted himself during the Vietnam War and whether he has been candid about his actions. These are serious matters. But they are not so serious that what George Bush did just six years ago—and not as a college kid, either—doesn't matter or why, to get right down to it, he's avoided scrutiny for a story so implausible it would have your average teenager grounded for a week.

Bush's initial position was that as vice president he was the personification of the three monkeys: No evil did he hear, see or speak. He was, as he put it, "not in the loop." And while it might well be that arms were traded for hostages and other nefarious plots were hatched from Oliver North's White House office, Bush himself knew next to nothing about it. In his 1987 campaign biography, "Looking Forward," Bush wrote that it was only after the Iran-contra operation was history that he got his "first real chance to see the picture as a whole." Up until then, he wrote, he had been—you guessed it—"out of the loop."

But my colleague Walter Pincus has counted some 36 times that Bush attended presidential briefings during 1986, when the topic du jour was Iran, hostages and arms sales to the contras. And in 1987, Bush told another of my colleagues, David Broder, that one reason he did not object to the swap of arms for hostages (for that, in essence, is what transpired), was that neither Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger nor Secretary of State George Shultz had done so. "If I had sat there and heard George Shultz and Caspar express it [an objection] strongly, maybe I would have had a stronger view. But when you don't know something, it's hard to react . . ." In that muddled syntax can be heard the muted bleat of a

sheep.

But if Bush didn't react, Shultz and Weinberger most certainly did—and with apparent outrage. Bush's characterization of them was patently false. They had forcefully objected to the arms sale. For that reason, an incredulous Weinberger called Shultz the day the Broder story appeared to, it seems, sputter his dismay. "He [Bush] was on the other side," Shultz quoted Weinberger as saying. "It's on the record. Why did he say that?" (Shultz dictated his recollection to an aide, and this record of the conversation is in the hands of the independent prosecutor.)

Yes, why indeed? It could be that Bush was convinced, with good reason, that the American public will continue to see Iran-contra as the policy equivalent of quantum physics—hopelessly complicated and of interest only to specialists. Second, he might have relied on the American press to become bored with a story that does not immediately hit pay dirt. And last, Bush is a team-player sort of guy. He played dummy for Reagan; he expected others to do the same for him. He has not been disappointed.

Whatever the reason, Bush's insistence that he was merely playing piano in the bordello we call Iran-contra doesn't merely stretch credulity, it shreds it. His own national security adviser at the time, Donald P. Gregg, was familiar with some details of the operation—details, Gregg insisted, he withheld from Bush. And Ollie North, Mr. Contra himself, had left notes referring to Bush in the dewy-eyed way North reserved for compadres in the cause. Bush, in short, managed to be outside while being at the very center of it. The president, it seems, is not a quick study.

It's not necessary to consider the Iran-contra affair a scandal to suspect Bush of not telling the truth about it. It's not even necessary to think anyone's a crook to suspect that Bush's answers have been less than straight. The evidence, circumstantial to be sure but persuasive nonetheless, suggests that when Bush says the difference between him and Clinton is that ephemeral quality called trust, he is, regrettably and ironically, on familiar ground: out of the loop once more.

Mr. Lawrence Walsh
Office of Special Prosecutor
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Washington, DC 20004

7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Md. 21702
9/7/92

Dear Mr. Walsh,

As in Poe's story of "The Purloined Letter" I think there is something just as obvious in the Iran/Contra matter that everyone has missed.

When President Reagan had Attorney General Meese at the White House to handle the limited-disclosure press conference that was the first official acknowledgement of this scandal, Meese was asked by a reporter why he had not sent the FBI in as soon as he had his first knowledge of the matter. Representing himself as a devout civil-libertarian Meese said that to have done that would have been wrong and improper and would have violated the rights of all spoken to or investigated - because he had no reason to believe that any federal law had been violated and with ^{no} violation of federal law the FBI had no jurisdiction.

This is not true, as Meese and White House counsel if not also others at the White House and certainly at the Department of Justice and the FBI knew. My authority is J. Edgar Hoover in his Warren Commission testimony. I enclose a copy of page 98 of its Volume V of its testimony. Hoover, in fact, volunteered this statement I believe is relevant - that the FBI has the right and obligation to make investigations at the request of the president. Its entire JFK assassination investigation, massive and ongoing, is based on such a request. Its main JFK assassination file is in its 62 file classification, for "administrative ~~inquiry~~ inquiry." And, I believe, if Meese had not taken this cover-up position much of the cover-up, like North's paper-shredding, would have been impossible.

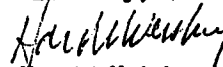
If Meese's statement is not included in any file of clippings you have it is recorded in the telecast, where I saw and heard it.

He therefore, I believe, has special responsibilities and culpabilities in the matter.

May I also use this to call to your attention the serious problem this creates when an attorney general can reject the appointment of a special counsel, as Barr did recently? In Meese's case blocking appointment of a special counsel would have been blocking investigation of his own transgression.

My apologies for my typing. It cannot be any better.

Sincerely,


Harold Weisberg

will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. HOOPER. I do.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Rankin will carry on the examination, Mr. Director.

Mr. RANKIN. Mr. Chief Justice, do you want to tell him briefly what our purpose is?

The CHAIRMAN. Oh, yes; it is our practice to make a brief statement before the testimony of each witness, and I will do it now.

Mr. Hoover will be asked to testify in regard to whether Lee H. Oswald was ever an agent, directly or indirectly, or an informer or acting on behalf of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in any capacity at any time, and whether he knows of any credible evidence of any conspiracy, either domestic or foreign, involved in the assassination of President Kennedy.

What he has to say about an article in the National Enquirer, Commission Exhibit No. 837, and concerning the failure to include the name and information concerning special agent Hosty in the initial report of the Oswald address book and any suggestions and recommendations he may have concerning improvements or changes in provisions for the protection of the President of the United States. Now, Mr. Rankin, you may proceed.

Mr. RANKIN. Mr. Hoover, will you state for the record your name and position?

Mr. HOOPER. J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice.

Mr. RANKIN. Where do you live, Mr. Hoover?

Mr. HOOPER. I live at 4036 30th Place, Northwest, Washington, D.C.

Mr. RANKIN. And you have been Director of the Bureau for some 40 years according to the newspapers?

Mr. HOOPER. That is correct; since 1924.

Mr. RANKIN. You have furnished us a considerable amount of information, Mr. Hoover, about whether or not Lee Harvey Oswald was ever an agent or acting for the Bureau in any capacity as informer or otherwise at any time. Are those statements correct?

Mr. HOOPER. They are correct. I can most emphatically say that at no time was he ever an employee of the Bureau in any capacity, either as an agent or as a special employee, or as an informant.

Mr. RANKIN. I call your particular attention to Exhibit 835, and suggest that you will find that that is your letter, together with your affidavit about this subject matter, and other matters that you furnished to us concerning this particular subject.

Mr. HOOPER. That is correct.

Mr. RANKIN. Do you wish to add anything?

Mr. HOOPER. No; there is nothing that I desire to add to what appears in this letter and my affidavit which accompanied it to the Commission.

Mr. RANKIN. You have provided many things to us in assisting the Commission in connection with this investigation and I assume, at least in a general way, you are familiar with the investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy, is that correct?

Mr. HOOPER. That is correct. When President Johnson returned to Washington he communicated with me within the first 24 hours, and asked the Bureau to pick up the investigation of the assassination because as you are aware, there is no Federal jurisdiction for such an investigation. (It is not a Federal crime to kill or attack the President or the Vice President or any of the continuity of officers who would succeed to the Presidency.)

However, the President has a right to request the Bureau to make special investigations, and in this instance he asked that this investigation be made. I immediately assigned a special force (headed by the special agent in charge at Dallas, Tex.) to initiate the investigation, and to get all details and facts concerning it, which we obtained, and then prepared a report which we submitted to the Attorney General for transmission to the President.

Mr. RANKIN. From your study of this entire matter of the assassination and work in connection with it, do you know of any credible evidence that has ever come to your attention that there was a conspiracy either foreign or domestic involved in the assassination?

Mr. HOOPER. I know of any contention of that come to the Bureau from reports that have come in. In addition, I have reported. I have been unable to find any evidence of a conspiracy or any domestic investigation of all possible President Kennedy.

Representative Ford. testimony, it is based on Mr. Hoover. That is correct.

Representative Ford. investigation of all possible

Mr. HOOPER. That is true to receive for days would probably be in the various weird allegations vibrations. We are still making a report to the on the face of it the allegations not have known any. There have been public statements absurd and without a basis in the Bureau, where we crank letters, that still to come.

I, personally, feel that everybody, because the announced views, without with whatever findings the FBI investigate the said that we had ignored

Representative Ford currently working to

Mr. HOOPER. I would present time at least for the investigation, because required in auxiliary some foreign countries

At the outset of the desire of the President quickly as possible, and 150 men at that time

Now, all the reports Washington by the assistant director of assistant to the Director

Reports in which been made of the extent of before, I, myself, haven't had any gap

Recently the Nation of a letter that had been ment of Justice to be arresting Rubinstein general Walker's life.

First, I had the report sent to the Commission it as an entire file—our files searched to find we had not. They had written an